



# ***BLM News***

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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## **Emergency Wild Horse and Burro Gather Ordered**

**Las Vegas** – The Bureau of Land Management, Las Vegas Field Office and the USDA Forest Service, Spring Mountain National Recreation Area have issued an emergency gather and removal order for about 300 wild horses and burros in the Muddy Mountains, Johnnie, Crystal, Red Rock and Cold Creek areas due to severe drought conditions in southern Nevada.

“The lack of rain has caused a serious impact on animal health and resource conditions,” said Gary McFadden, BLM Wild Horse and Burro Specialist. “This emergency gather will be conducted to bring the wild horse and burro population in line with the limited forage and water.”

Lack of precipitation has hindered vegetation growth for the past couple of years. “These horses and burros are eating vegetation that has not had new growth for two years,” said McFadden. “Because the quality of forage has steadily declined the health of the animals has decreased as well.”

The Henneke Condition Score System rates the health of horses on a scale of one to seven. One represents an animal near death and seven represents an animal that is healthy and well fed. Many of the horses to be gathered have been ranked at a two. Animals in two gather locations are currently ranked at a five.

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Emergency gathers usually are initiated July 1. Due to the dire emergency status, the gathers will take place in late June. The wild horses and burros will be gathered by helicopter. Helicopters have proven to be the safest, most effective and least stressful gather method.

Wild horses and burros will be transported to the National Wild Horse and Burro Center in Ridgecrest, California where they will receive veterinary care, be freeze-marked and receive inoculations for common equine diseases. Because of the emergency situation, all ages will be removed. While all animals are available for adoption, BLM is prepared to place older animals in long term care facilities such as the Wild Horse Sanctuary in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

For information on how to qualify to adopt in Nevada, visit the BLM Web site at [www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov](http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov) or call 1-800-417-9647. While these wild horses and burros will not be ready for adoption for about 60 days, there are many wild horses from other gathers which are available now for adoption by qualified individuals.

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The origin of wild horses dates back to the days of Columbus and Hernando Cortez, Italian and Spanish explorers who brought horses to North America. Burros were brought by Jesuit missionaries and later used extensively by miners. Many of the descendants of these horses and burros escaped or were abandoned by settlers, ranchers, prospectors, Native American tribes and the U.S. Cavalry between the late 1800s and 1930s.

These feral creatures subsequently were hunted by “mustangers.” Considered pests by many who were trying to settle the West, their population was greatly reduced. A public outcry in the late 1960s influenced Congress to enact the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act in 1971, providing for the protection, management and control of wild horses and burros on the public land. Federal protection and the absence of natural predators contributed to flourishing populations.

Nevada is home to more than half of the nation’s wild horses. These animals live in more than 100 Herd Management Areas, most of which are located on BLM land. In an effort to keep wild horses and burros and the rangeland healthy, animals are gathered and made available for adoption. The next adoption in Las Vegas will be held in October.